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NOTES AND LITERATURE

TEACHING

McMurry's Special Method in Elementary Science[1] is by far the most comprehensive treatment of the subject which has appeared in this country, and must prove extremely useful to the teacher in the public schools. The first half of the book treats of the aims and method of the teaching of elementary science,— the author at first makes a brave attempt to call it nature study, but throughout the greater part of the book calls it science,— the second half offers model lessons and a very full list of topics for a graded course of study.

Mr. McMurry insists that the topics shall come from the pupil's close environment,— Professor Hodge has already suggested that a louse on a pupil's head might be used for an instructive lesson on vermin,— and he has introduced as a new feature many topics dealing with the application of science to life. A study of the principles which govern the great inventions as well as our homely household appliances, can be made to appeal strongly to children. The author insists that a generation trained in the elementary problems of sanitation, physiology, and hygiene will not fall such an easy prey to the patent medicine frauds, and will back up boards of health in the fight for pure food and clean streets.

Professor Jackman some time ago outlined a course of nature study in which topics from every field of physics, chemistry, astronomy, meteorology, physiography, and biology were coördinated. Mr. McMurry extends the field still further, so that the variety of subjects to be handled would, we should think, appal any but the most unusually well trained teacher. It is a pity that the importance of the right method does not stand out more clearly. Many teachers will continue to convey information in many fields instead of training powers of reasoning in one. Mr. McMurry of course insists on the well known truths which should govern methods in science teaching, and often expresses his truths forcibly, but this book like all his others suffers from an astonishing obscurity of style and unskilful presentation. The trail of the German "Pedagogik" is over it all.

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[1] McMurry, Charles A. *Special Method in Elementary Science for the Common School.* New York, The Macmillan Co., 1905. 12 mo, ix + 275 pp.

In the chapter on method the place of imagination in science teaching is discussed; "children, primary teachers and poets" are encouraged to use a certain amount of license. It is amusing in view of recent controversies to see Mr. Burroughs figure as an example of the imaginative school of nature students.

There is a very full list of books which serve as an aid in science teaching.

R. H.

EVOLUTION

Lotsy's Theories of Descent.[1]— This book is a series of twenty-one lectures delivered to students at the University of Leyden and designed "to awaken a desire for the investigation of questions relating to theories of descent." This aim it is well adapted to fulfil. The scope of the book is wide, and the discussions, while necessarily not exhaustive, never fail to be stimulating and to give the reader a view in perspective of a large part of the field of evolutionary thought and investigation. This is true in particular of the newer aspects of evolution, concerning which most of all a book of this sort was needed.

Lectures 1 and 2 are introductory in character. In them are discussed the limitations of evolution, the fact that it cannot explain everything, the beginning of the universe being quite beyond its sphere. The relation of science to religion is discussed and the absence of any real conflict between the two is shown; the ultimate questions of being and of consciousness are found to be beyond solution either by science or by religion. Lecture 3 deals with the origin of the earth, the newly discovered transmutation of one element into another, the origin of life and the fact that among organisms as among the elements one form may give rise to another. The dependence of organic form upon two sets of factors is noted, one set internal, the other external. Lecture 4 is devoted to the external factors or "morphogenic stimuli," such as light, heat, pressure, chemical composition

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[1] Lotsy, J. P. *Vorlesungen über Deszendenztheorien mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der botanischen Seite der Frage. Teil I.* Jena, Gustav Fischer, 1906. 8vo, xii+384 pp., 2 pls., 124 text-figs.